

**Testimony of Elisa Martinez, Student, Bridge Academy
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Appropriations Committee
February 16, 2016**

Good evening members of the Appropriations Committee, parents and fellow students.

My name is Elisa, and I'm a high school student at Bridge Academy in Bridgeport. I'm here today because Connecticut needs to make sure success is in reach for every child in the state.

I have attended public charter schools since the 7th grade, and I am now a senior in high school. When I first started at Bridge Academy, it took some time to adjust to a new learning environment. With my mom and teachers encouraging me, I started to excel in my classes.

Bridge Academy has provided me with amazing opportunities and consistent support, and my teachers have provided me with the tools and preparation I need for college and beyond.

I am now halfway through my senior year of high school, and I can say with confidence that I am well prepared for the life that lies ahead of me. Thanks to my school, I'm hopeful and excited for the future.

Governor Malloy's proposed budget does a lot to help students across Connecticut, but we still have more to do. Every student deserves the opportunities I've received, and for this to become a reality the state needs to provide all of Connecticut's high-quality public schools with equal funding.

This isn't about district schools versus charter schools -- many of my family and friends attend district schools. It's about quality schools PERIOD.

I need Connecticut's elected leaders to stand with my mom and me, and with all of the parents and children who are demanding great schools **and fair funding** for every student.

We need to provide every school with the funding it deserves, including public charter schools — schools where children like me can live up to their fullest potential and reach the highest heights.

Every child deserves to be treated equally - and the time to act is now!

Thank you.